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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001513

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE (SILVERMAN AND GOELLNER-SWEET), NEA/NGA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2013

TAGS: PGOV PREL TU IZ AF

SUBJECT: TURKISH THINK TANK ALLEGES US PLANS TO REDEFINE
"MIDDLE EAST."

(U) CLASSIFIED BY DCM RDEUTSCH, REASONS 1.5 (B)(D).

¶11. ((C) SUMMARY: ASAM, A RESEARCH ORGANIZATION PROVIDING ADVICE AND RESEARCH TO THE TGS AND THE GOT, ASSERTS THE USG'S POST-IRAQ GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY INVOLVES REDEFINING THE MIDDLE EAST REGION TO INCLUDE AFGHANISTAN. ASAM SUPPORTS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTONOMOUS REGIONS FOR KURDS AND TURKMEN IN POST-WAR IRAQ BECAUSE IT BELIEVES THAT AN IRAQ BASED ON THE FEDERAL SYSTEM WILL SERVE AS A POTENTIAL CATALYST FOR REGIONAL INSTABILITY. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (C) WE MET WITH UMIT OZDAG, CHAIRMAN OF THE TURKISH CENTER FOR EURASIAN STRATEGIC STUDIES (ASAM) AT THE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION'S HEADQUARTERS IN THE CANKAYA SECTION OF ANKARA. THE HEADQUARTERS ARE PLUSH, SUGGESTING THAT OZDAG HAS BEEN A SUCCESSFUL FUND-RAISER. ASAM WAS PREVIOUSLY FUNDED BY TGS. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ADVANCED STRATEGY CENTER -- A THINK TANK WITH DEEP CONNECTIONS TO THE NSC, TGS, AND INTEL SERVICES -- ASAM IS NOW SUPPORTED BY A \$5 MILLION GRANT FROM ISLAMIST TURKISH FOOD PROCESSING COMPANY ULKER AS A WAY TO EXPAND ITS POLITICAL ACCESS TO THE SECULARIST ESTABLISHMENT. OZDAG SAYS ASAM PROVIDES ADVICE TO THE TURKISH GENERAL STAFF (TGS) AND OTHER GOT ENTITIES AND HE CLAIMED GOOD RELATIONS WITH RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE US, ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST. HE CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH INSTITUTES IN WESTERN EUROPE, ALTHOUGH HIS GERMAN IS FLUENT FROM YEARS OF STUDY AND TEACHING IN GERMANY. ASAM IS EMBARKING ON A NEW RESEARCH PROJECT THAT INVOLVES HOWARD UNIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON, DC, ACCORDING TO OZDAG.

US RESHAPING GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

¶13. (C) OZDAG STATED THAT HIS AND ASAM'S MIDDLE EAST FOCUS IS CURRENTLY MORE IN THE US OPERATION POTENTIAL IN IRAQ. OZDAG BELIEVES THE US IS SEEKING TO RESHAPE THE GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER THE IRAQ ISSUE IS RESOLVED SO THAT AFGHANISTAN IS INCLUDED IN THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST REGION. IN ANTICIPATION OF THE US'S POTENTIAL REDEFINITION OF THE REGION, ASAM HAS ENCOURAGED THE GOT TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN TO FURTHER TURKEY'S OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS.

FEDERAL IRAQ AGAINST TURKISH NATIONAL INTERESTS

¶14. (C) OZDAG ECHOES THE STANDARD OFFICIAL TURKISH LINE THAT THE CREATION OF A FEDERAL IRAQ IS AGAINST TURKISH NATIONAL INTERESTS. FURTHER, OZDAG STATES THAT A FEDERAL IRAQ WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASED ETHNIC TENSIONS IN TURKEY. OZDAG WOULD PREFER TO SEE IRAQ REORGANIZED INTO A "UNIFIED, DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY," ESTABLISHING AUTONOMOUS REGIONS FOR BOTH KURDS AND TURKMEN. OZDAG ALLEGES THAT THERE ARE 2 1/2 MILLION TURKMEN AND 4 MILLION KURDS IN IRAQ. DENYING BOTH KURDS AND TURKMEN AUTONOMOUS REGIONS, OZDAG ASSERTS, WOULD VIOLATE BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAWS.

COOPERATION WITH KURDS AGAINST TURKISH INTERESTS

¶15. (C) OZDAG BELIEVES THAT WASHINGTON'S COOPERATION WITH KURDS IS INCONSISTENT WITH TURKISH INTERESTS. HE PREDICTS SUPPORT FOR KURDS WILL EXTRACT ITS OWN SOCIAL PRICE IN TURKEY, SINCE THERE ARE MANY IN TURKEY WHO WILL FOLLOW A KURDISH "ANTI-POPE" AS A RESULT.

SHI'A DO NOT NEED AUTONOMY

¶16. (C) OZDAG DOES NOT PERCEIVE A NEED FOR AUTONOMOUS REGIONS/STATUS FOR IRAQI SHI'A, A MAJORITY POPULATION IN IRAQ BUT, RATHER, THAT OTHER MINORITY GROUPS REQUIRED SPECIAL PROTECTION FROM THE SHI'A. HE NOTED THAT TEL AVIV WOULD PROBABLY OPPOSE ANY AUTONOMY FOR THE SHI'A.

US DOESN'T CARE ABOUT NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT

17. (C) BELIEVING THE US DOES NOT CARE ABOUT THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT, OZDAG WARNS THAT ESTABLISHING A FEDERAL IRAQ WILL PLANT THE SEEDS OF LONG-TERM REGIONAL INSTABILITY. ANKARA, OUT OF SELF INTEREST, WILL BE COMPELLED TO ESTABLISH CLOSER TIES TO TEHERAN AND DAMASCUS, AS IT DID IN THE EARLY NINETIES, HE AVERRED.

18. (C) COMMENT: OZDAG'S ASSERTIONS REFLECT THE MIDDLE OF THE CURVE ON TURKISH ANALYSIS OF IRAQ, TURKISH INTERESTS AND US POLICY. END COMMENT.

PEARSON